



February 17, 2022

The Honorable Delores G. Kelley
Senate Finance Committee
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support – SB 659: Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Psychiatric Inpatient Care - Admissions Restrictions (Psychiatric Hospital Admissions Equity Act)

Dear Chairman Kelley and Honorable Members of the Committees:

The Maryland Psychiatric Society (MPS) and the Washington Psychiatric Society (WPS) are state medical organizations whose physician members specialize in diagnosing, treating, and preventing mental illnesses, including substance use disorders. Formed more than sixty-five years ago to support the needs of psychiatrists and their patients, both organizations work to ensure available, accessible, and comprehensive quality mental health resources for all Maryland citizens; and strive through public education to dispel the stigma and discrimination of those suffering from a mental illness. As the district branches of the American Psychiatric Association covering the state of Maryland, MPS and WPS represent over 1000 psychiatrists and physicians currently in psychiatric training.

MPW/WPS supports Senate Bill 659: Maryland Medical Assistance Program - Psychiatric Inpatient Care - Admissions Restrictions (Psychiatric Hospital Admissions Equity Act) (SB 659). Historically, the state, through its policies and procedures, has restricted Medicaid patients from being admitted to many of our state's institutes of mental disease (IMDs). For example, the state employed a hard budget cap on IMD utilization.

Recently, the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) overturned a policy that emergency departments receive denials from five acute care psychiatric units before the state granted a waiver and a patient could be admitted to an IMD in the state. SB 659 seeks is prophylactic and seeks to codify this current practice into law so that in the future the department will continue to use medical criteria rather than its budget in determining where a patient should be placed for inpatient care.

MPS/WPS, therefore, ask this committee for a favorable report on SB 659. If you have any questions with regard to this testimony, please feel free to contact Thomas Tompsett Jr. at tommy.tompsett@mdlobbyist.com.

Respectfully submitted,
The Maryland Psychiatric Society and the Washington Psychiatric Society
Legislative Action Committee